J-5

CITY OF LODI
COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

AGENDA TITLE: Authorize the City Manager to Communicate with the California Energy Commission with Regard to the Removal of Condition VIS-2 Requiring a Rapid Growth Tree Landscape Buffer for the Lodi Energy Center Project

MEETING DATE: December 16,2009

PREPARED BY: City Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorize the City Manager to communicate with the California Energy Commission to request the removal of Condition **VIS-2** requiring planting of fast-growing evergreens and other vegetation for the Lodi Energy Center.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The Northern California Power Association (NCPA) has brought to staff's attention that The California Energy Commission is considering imposing a condition upon the Lodi Energy Center Project that would require the planting of a rapid growth tree landscape buffer. Although Lodi generally supports landscaping and screening conditions, City staff has several concerns with the proposed condition as it applies to this specific location.

As Council is aware, a significant portion of the view shed the CEC condition proposes to protect will border a potential solar farm planned by the City of Lodi. Trees along that buffer would cast shade upon the solar panels and significantly reduce their efficiency. Moreover, a significant City goal in constructing the solar farm is to market Lodi as a green technology-friendly city to potential employers looking for business sites in the green technology sector. A landscape buffer would reduce or eliminate the visibility of the solar farm from **1-5,** thus, significantly impacting its potential to achieve the intended marketing effect.

For the above reasons, staff recommends Council authorize the City Manager to send **a** letter to the California Energy Commission supporting NCPA's efforts to remove condition VIS-2.

The condition as stated in the CEC staff report is as follows:

VIS-2 To screen the project from Interstate **5** and the White Slough Recreational Area, the project owner shall provide landscaping that reduces the visibility of the power plant structures and complies with local policies and ordinances. Trees and other vegetation consisting of informal groupings of fast-growing evergreens shall be strategically placed and of sufficient density and height to effectively blend in with any existing landscaping as well as screen the power plant structures within the shortest feasible time.

APPROVED: _____
Blair King, City Manager

The landscaping shall comply with ordinances of the County of San Joaquin Community Development Department and the City of Lodi Community Development Department pertaining to preservation of scenic views of selected highways, corridors, and recreational areas; enhancement of the aesthetic quality of major streets and public/civic areas; and upgrading and enhancement of industrial areas.

The project owner shall maintain the landscaping for the life of the project, including providing any needed irrigation, removing debris on an annual or semi-annual basis, and replacing dead or dying vegetation.

- The project owner shall submit to the CPM for review and approval and simultaneously to [specify local agency] for review and comment a landscaping plan whose proper implementation will satisfy these requirements.

- The project owner shall not implement the plan until the project owner receives approval from the CPM.

Verification: The landscaping plan shall be submitted to the CPM for review and approval and simultaneously to the County of San Joaquin Community Development Department and the City of Lodi Community Development Department for review and comment at least 60 days prior to installing the landscaping.

FISCAL IMPACT: Financial impacts related to this action concern the financial viability of a solar field and the loss of alternative energy. From a broader perspective, Lodi benefits financially in a variety of different ways including electric rates, lease revenues ($60,310), water sales ($960,000), and one-time sales tax ($1,400,000) from the Lodi Energy Center Project.

Blair King, City Manager